

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SUFFOLK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS,
RECREATION AND CONSERVATION
MINUTES OF DECEMBER 18, 2008
MEADOWEDGE, WEST SAYVILLE, N.Y.**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Gil Cardillo	Vice Chairman, Trustee, Town of Riverhead
Miles Borden	Trustee, Town of Smithtown
Ray Corwin	Member at Large
Gregory Dawson	Trustee, Town of Islip
Scott Hilary	Trustee, Town of Southold
Alexander McKay	Trustee, Town of Huntington
Amy Engel	Member of the Board
Richard F. White, Jr.	Trustee, Town of East Hampton
Edward Walters	Trustee, Southampton

ABSENT

Bill Shilling	Member of the Board
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PARKS DEPARTMENT

John W. Pavacic	Commissioner
Nick Gibbons	Principal Environmental Analyst
Colleen Hofmeister	Principal Contracts Examiner
Tom Hroncich	Director of Parks Foundation
Terry Maccarrone	Coordinator of Community Based Programs
Karen Nicholson	Superintendent of Parks
Ann Rothenberg	Assistant to the Commissioner
Karen Summers-Solinas	Senior Accountant

GUESTS

Lauretta Fischer	Principal Environmental Analyst, Planning Department
Allen Kovesdy	Director, Management & Research
Janet Longo	Deputy Director, Real Property Acquisitions and Management
Marisa Marletti-Schifano	County Attorney
Lance Reinheimer	Legislative Budget Review
Thomas Ryan	Office of Legislator Vilorio-Fisher
Legislator Vilorio-Fisher	Legislature
Andy Carracino	Timber Point Golf Pro
Fred Gipp	West Sayville Golf Pro

Vice Chairman Cardillo called the meeting to order.

ELECTION OF NEW CHAIRMAN

A motion to nominate Vice Chairman Gil Cardillo as Chairman was made by Trustee McKay and seconded by Trustee White. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 9-0-0.

ELECTION OF NEW VICE CHAIRMAN

A motion to nominate Trustee Greg Dawson as Vice Chairman was made by Trustee White and seconded by Trustee Borden. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 9-0-0.

LEGISLATOR VIVIAN VILORIA-FISHER RE INCREASE IN PARKS FEES

Legislator Viloria-Fisher extended her appreciation to the Trustees for their time and effort. The fee increase legislation she proposed for the Parks Department was vetoed and the veto was sustained. They are going back to the drawing board. Legislator Viloria-Fisher explained the history behind her recommendation for fee increases. There has not been a rate increase since 2002. The cost of living index has gone up 23%. The cost of utilities has gone up and the Parks Department is spending 65% more on energy costs than it did in 2002. These increases should be reflected in the rates people pay to use our facilities in our parks. Legislator Viloria-Fisher apologized that the rate increase came so precipitously and without warning. She explained the lion share of our budget rests on our sales tax revenues. The County Executive, in his recommended budget, projected a sales tax revenue increase of 2%. When the Legislature proposed their amendments to the budget, they downgraded the projection to 1%. There was not a will to raise property taxes and there was not a will to use any of the \$125 million tax stabilization funds, so the legislature had to look for revenue wherever they could. One of the pieces of our Parks system, the Vanderbilt Museum, fell into such a state of financial collapse that our choice was to put \$800,000 into the Vanderbilt or \$800,000 to moth ball it. Legislator Viloria-Fisher said they had to put this rate increase together because there was going to be a huge hole in the budget. The money that is raised by Parks fees goes into the General Fund. With the kind of economic strain the County is under, we need to revisit a rate increase in our County Parks. Legislator Viloria-Fisher asked Budget Review to put together a new Resolution and the new rate increases will not exceed 25%.

Lance Reinheimer, Legislative Budget Review, gave an overview of the process. He explained how the Parks Department is supported by the General Fund. Legislator Viloria-Fisher is also looking to sunset the fees and Friday will no longer be considered a weekend day. It will be considered a weekday.

Allen Kovesdy said Legislator Viloria-Fisher gave a good overview on the budget and proceeded to review other aspects of the County budget. When the budget was crafted, the County Executive was very proud that in these times of economic turmoil he did not raise any fees for the parks and beaches. If times are hard, people should have the ability to stay home and use our gifts of nature at the most economical cost available. Mr. Kovesdy explained that the operating budget for the Vanderbilt Museum rests with the Board of Trustees for the Vanderbilt. The County Executive and Budget Review Office has no control over their operating budget. One of the things the County Executive objects to is that the museum has had a systemic deficit 5 of the last 6 years. They have been taking money from their endowment to balance their budget. When the Vanderbilt comes before the Legislature, they do not present a full picture. They never talk about the fees they charge (i.e. for weddings and the planetarium) and keep their finances to themselves. Before the County bails them out, they should get their own shop in order. The first thing they need to do is get a balanced budget.

Lance Reinheimer stated that Legislative Budget Review does get monthly reports from the Vanderbilt and prepared by their treasurer and they are actively involved with the Vanderbilt structure.

Legislator Viloria-Fisher said the discussion at this meeting is about the rate increase, not the Vanderbilt. How the Vanderbilt is run is not our purview.

Trustee Corwin said putting the Vanderbilt aside, the most telling point from what he's heard is that the Trustees here, along with the Legislature, is focusing on fees. The most compelling argument is that the fees have not increased along with the cost of living/consumer price index. The Trustees need to focus on whether the fees are rational.

Trustee McKay suggested the Trustees review the new fee structure proposed by Legislator Vilorio-Fisher before it goes to the Legislature. The Commissioner should also be able to review the proposed fee increase.

Trustee Engel said the County Executive feels very strongly, especially in this economic climate, that the fees not be raised. People are getting hit every where they turn right now and there's no guarantee that any money raised by a fee increase will go back to the Parks Department.

Trustee White suggested that we all meet in the middle on this issue.

Trustee Dawson said he would like to know how much money each fee increase would generate.

Lance Reinheimer said when they do a revised financial impact statement for the new resolution, they can provide the Trustees with the details of what that impact is by category.

Andy Carracino, the Timber Point Golf Pro, said before raising golf fees, the expense side needs to be looked at. New York State may be raising golf fees, but they hold the U.S. Open at Bethpage and that's a tremendous boost to what they can charge. The Town of Brookhaven golf courses are under private management. How much these agencies are putting into operating budgets and capital budgets should be reviewed.

Fred Gipp said there are three major factors that come into play with golf: weather, course conditions and price. Suffolk County golf courses need to be competitive.

Trustee Cardillo said this issue was brought before the Trustees at their last meeting due to the urgency of the financial situation at the Vanderbilt.

Legislator Vilorio-Fisher said she agreed to come to this meeting to talk about the Parks rate increase because that is our purview. The Vanderbilt is not our purview.

PUBLIC PORTION

Ginny Munger-Kahn - Submitted more statements and petitions in support of an unleashed dog park at Coindre Hall. L.I. Dog sent a letter to the neighbors on Abbington Drive inviting them to come meet and talk with L.I. Dog. At a future Trustees meeting L.I. Dog would like to have an in depth conversation with the Trustees about their concept for an unleashed dog park.

Chairman Cardillo said the Trustees understand the position of L.I. Dog and the Trustees will take all their information under advisement.

Sharon Sacks – A dog owner and neighbor of Coindre Hall. She does not hear any noise, but feels Coindre Hall is in trouble. The building is falling apart. The boat house is unsafe. Where is the money going to come from to take care of these mansions? No one has mentioned anything about fundraising or volunteers to assist in this effort.

Barbara Buscareno – It has been mentioned that the Trustees heard everything they need to know about Coindre Hall at their last Trustees meeting. L.I. Dog has been working on this proposal very hard and put

a lot of thought, time and effort into it. Coindre Hall is very important to a lot of dog owners and they would like to see a resolution to this issue. She would like to know if the Trustees will be voting this issue up or down.

Mike Sullivan - Lives on Abbingdon Drive and represents the homeowners of Abbingdon Drive. They do not want to see a “no leash situation” at Coindre Hall. Their homes are approximately 40 feet from the property. The dogs bark and owners are chasing their dogs. Loose dogs cannot see invisible fences – they are going to run. It’s very disturbing to their peace of mind and living there is horrible.

Trustee McKay said before we proceed further, in the published regulations a dog or cat may be permitted on a leash restricting them to the immediate area of campgrounds and outer beach areas. The website of Suffolk County Parks states pets must be leashed at all times except in the designated dog run area at West Hills County Park (it does not include Blydenburgh). When walking your pet it must be on a leash no more than 6 feet in length.

Trustee McKay proposed a Trustees resolution based on Suffolk County Legislative Resolution 643-2007 to amend Parks Rules and Regulations, section 378-4 “Prohibited Acts” to read, “No dogs shall be permitted off leash outside of an authorized dog run area that is fenced in, bordered by natural boundaries or otherwise segregated from other park uses.....No animals shall be allowed at large, except as provided in this section.” According to the Charter, these changes do not become effective until approved by the Parks Board of Trustees.

A motion to approve this resolution was made by Trustee Borden and seconded by Trustee Corwin. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 9-0-0.

Chairman Cardillo reviewed a newspaper article he submitted to the Trustees entitled “Dog Parks: Not for All Dogs.”

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 20, 2008

A motion to accept the minutes was made by Trustee White and seconded by Trustee McKay. The minutes were unanimously approved by a vote of 9-0-0.

PRESENTATION BY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND REAL ESTATE

Lauretta Fischer proposed one acquisition. A colored site map was distributed describing the property.

Tuthills Creek County Park Addition – Schultz property

The acquisition of .06 acres in the Village of Patchogue, Town of Brookhaven. This will be acquired under the Suffolk County Open Space Preservation Program.

A motion to approve this acquisition was made by Trustee White and seconded by Trustee Walters. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 9-0-0.

COMMISSIONER’S REPORT

Mileage Reimbursement

Karen Summers-Solinas reviewed the new mileage reimbursement procedures. The mileage is calculated from a centroid area (determined by the County). The Commissioner reported that Deputy Commissioner Bellone has requested adjustments to these centroids. Karen Summers-Solinas reported the mileage reimbursement rate for January 1st, 2008 through June 30th, 2008 was \$0.50 per mile. From July 1, 2008 to December 31, 2008 the mileage reimbursement rate is \$0.585 per mile. The reimbursement rate will go

back down to \$0.50 per mile after January 1st, 2009. She asked the Trustees to please include today's meeting to their mileage calculations and submit their reports **no later than the January 15th Trustees meeting**. The mileage reimbursement vouchers can be mailed to the Commissioner's office.

South Bay Street Property

The Commissioner reported that the County Executive vetoed the acquisition of this property, but the Legislature did override the veto. This acquisition has been approved. The Real Property Acquisitions Department again reviewed the language regarding this particular acquisition fund and it does require the Trustees approval. The Commissioner believes this acquisition cannot become effective because the Trustees denied the acquisition. The County Attorney will review the language.

Cupsogue

The Commissioner reported a meeting took place with the Village of Westhampton Dunes and DPW regarding improvements to the entrance at Cupsogue to relieve some of the summertime traffic. The meeting went well. The Village is moving ahead to provide the County with an easement over their property. The proposed improvements will also increase parking by 5 or 6 spaces.

Manorville Hills Trail Head

The Commissioner reported we have completed Phase I of the Trail Head opening. The Parks Department will be working with DEC and user groups to develop a trail system.

Budget

The Commissioner reported that it has been a very difficult budget year and 2009 will be more difficult. The Parks Department will be experiencing a reduction in the operating budget next year, particularly in overtime and seasonal personnel costs. In January, the Commissioner will sit down with Parks staff to determine how best to address this issue.

Long Island Maritime Museum

Tom Hroncich spoke about several issues regarding the Long Island Maritime Museum (LIMM). He said that 2008 was a very difficult year for the LIMM and that its self-inflicted problems, particularly surrounding fundraising events and personnel, took up an inordinate amount of time for the Parks Department during the course of the year. The group's endowment, invested by the LIMM Board of Directors, has lost more than half of its value in less than one year. It is now worth approximately \$229,000 – at one point it was worth more than \$520,000. As of December 5th, the Parks Department has begun an audit of LIMM's financial activities. Mr. Hroncich stated that LIMM is in the process of searching for a new Executive Director and passed around a job description to the Board. Commissioner Pavacic reported that the Parks Department's license agreement with LIMM expires at the end of 2010 and that the County will be seeking to make changes to the agreement.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Cardillo reported all issues were covered.

ROUND TABLE

Trustee Hilary reported there was a vacancy on the Sporting Advisory Council and he would like to be considered.

Commissioner Pavacic reported there are several other candidates under consideration for this position. He will advise in the near future.

Trustee McKay reported he attended the RFP meeting at Coindre Hall. Colleen Hofmeister did a wonderful job.

Trustee White asked for a status of the boardwalk at Cupsogue. Terry Maccarrone reported he has reached out to DPW and is waiting for their response.

Colleen Hofmeister reported that Parks has implemented an RFP for Coindre Hall and received one proposal from Lessings. Their proposal was excellent and Parks is looking forward to this partnership.

Colleen Hofmeister reported we are in the final stages of negotiations with Zebra Golf to manage the golf course and restaurant at Bergen Point.

Colleen Hofmeister reported negotiations are in process for Rusty Leaver's final option renewal for the equestrian facility in Montauk.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 15th, Meadowedge in West Sayville.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Trustee White and seconded by Trustee Engel. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 9-0-0.